

Sharp-tailed Grouse Harvest 2005

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Abstract

A change to the permit issuing process was initiated in 2003. A sharp-tailed grouse permit application is no longer included in the Patron License Package. Anyone who wants to apply for a sharp-tail permit has to pay a \$3 application fee; which consequently has caused fewer hunters to apply, units to be undersubscribed, and many hunters to receive two tags. Sharp-tailed grouse management unit 8 was closed for the 2005 hunting season due to low population numbers. The dancing ground surveys done in the spring of 2005 showed decreased population numbers, low enough to close the unit. If population numbers increase in subsequent years, the unit will be re-opened.

During the 2005 hunting season, five hundred and twenty-six (526) hunters applied for 780 permits in three different sharp-tailed grouse management units (deer management units) in the northwestern portion of the state. The hunters harvested 31 birds, a decrease of 23% from the reported 2004 harvest.

Methods

A change to the sharp-tailed grouse permit application took effect in 2003, when the sharp-tailed grouse permit application was no longer included in the Patron License Package. All hunters that want to apply for a sharp-tail permit are required to pay a \$3 application fee, consequently fewer hunters apply. Applicants were required to apply for permits based on deer management unit boundaries. Permit levels were set by the DNR, based on sharp-tailed grouse dancing ground surveys in the spring of 2005. All permits were mailed to hunters prior to the start of the hunting season. After harvesting a sharp-tailed grouse, the hunter was required to record the date of kill and the deer management unit of kill on the registration stub, and mail it back to the DNR in Madison.

Results

Five hundred and twenty-six (526) hunters applied for sharp-tailed harvest permits in three deer management units across the northwestern part of the state. Deer management units that were open to hunting are shown in Figure 1. Seven hundred and eighty (780) permits were issued in 2005, a 22% decrease from 2004. Sixty (60) hunters did not receive a permit because they requested a unit that was oversubscribed or because they applied for a unit that was not open to hunting. Harvest permit distribution is shown in Table 1.

The 2005 sharp-tailed grouse season was held from 15 October through 6 November 2005. Reported harvest as recorded on returned hunter registration stubs was 31 birds. This was lower than the last sharp-tailed grouse harvest of 40 birds in 2004 (Figure 2). No estimate of hunter compliance was attempted. Therefore, actual harvest of sharp-tailed grouse was probably higher. The deer management unit with the highest sharp-tailed grouse harvest was unit 2, with 25 birds taken (Table 1). Permit success was highest in unit 10 at 12.0%. No birds were reportedly harvested from unit 9. Success rates are not corrected for non-hunters, or nonreporting.

The reduced harvest numbers are likely the result of a decrease in sharp-tailed grouse permits, decreased population numbers, and unit 8 being closed. The dancing ground surveys done in the spring of 2005 showed a decrease of 23% from 2004. With lower population numbers the scattered populations are harder for hunters to find.

Most of the harvest occurred during opening weekend. Harvest on weekends generally surpassed weekday harvest. A full account of date of harvest can be found in Table 2.

Table 1. *Sharp-tailed grouse permit distribution, harvest and permit success, 2005.*

Unit	Permits Issued	Harvest	% Success
2	620*	25	4.0%
9	110	0	0.0%
10	50	6	12.0%

*Includes 1st, and 2nd tags.

Table 2. *Sharp-tailed grouse harvest by date, 2005 (Bolded dates indicate weekends).*

Date of Kill	Number
10/15/2005	11
10/16/2005	1
10/17/2005	2
10/18/2005	1
10/19/2005	1
10/20/2005	0
10/21/2005	0
10/22/2005	1
10/23/2005	1
10/24/2005	0
10/25/2005	0
10/26/2005	0
10/27/2005	1
10/28/2005	1
10/29/2005	0
10/30/2005	0
10/31/2005	1
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11/02/2005	0
11/03/2005	0
11/04/2005	1
11/05/2005	3
11/06/2005	6

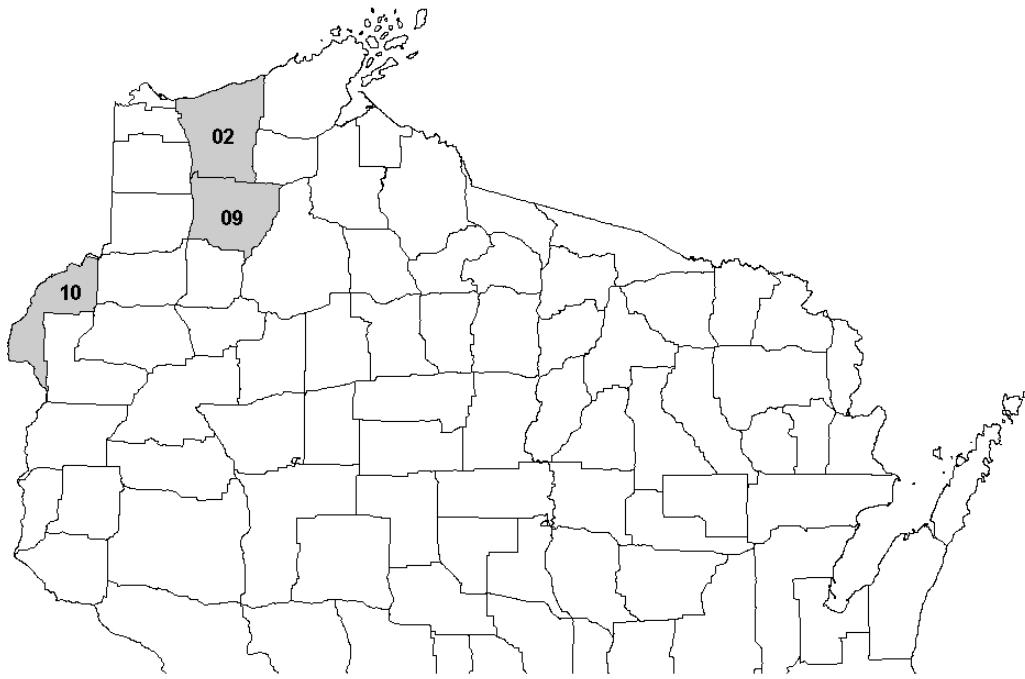


Figure 1. Shaded deer management units were open to sharp-tail hunting in 2005.

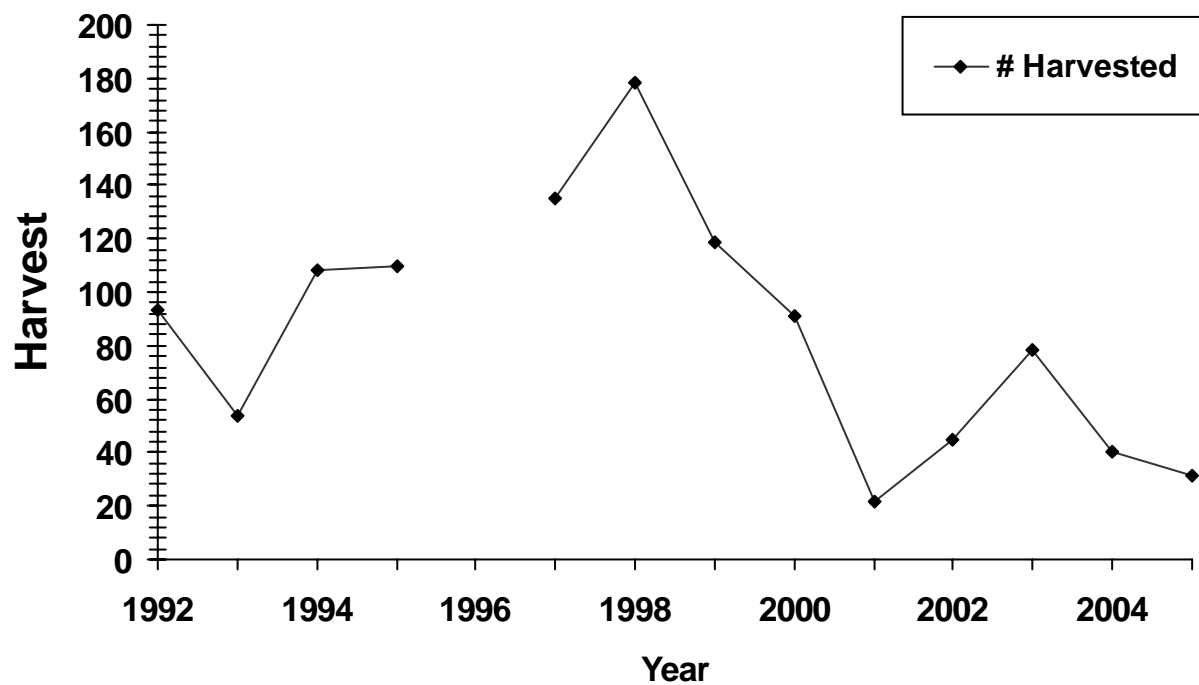


Figure 2. Sharp-tailed grouse harvest, 1992-2005.